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ABSTRACT

Testimony about the role of education and teachers with regard to an extended school day/year is presented in this paper, which argues that the school must deliver and attend to students' wide range of intellectual and social needs. Changing social conditions have created new and increased responsibilities for schools, in which administrators must become better prepared to provide leadership in the delivery of social services and teachers must be "front line" diagnosticians and referral agents. To carry out their new responsibilities, teachers must be provided with staff, more preparation time, and access to resources. If schools move to longer school years or days, the first priority must be to provide student services. The second priority is to give teachers at least 1,100 clock hours per year of quality instructional time with K-12 students. Other needs are to allow teachers time for diagnostic/referral functions and professional development. (LMI)

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TESTIMONY BEFORE

NATIONAL EDUCATION COMMISSION ON TIME AND LEARNING

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Hearing--Ypsilanti, MI
April 30, 1993

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Commission, distinguished guests. I am Jerry Robbins, dean of the College of Education at Eastern Michigan University. EMU is the nation's largest producer of educational personnel and is the recipient of a number of national recognitions for the quality of aspects of our programming. A disproportionate number of these recognitions have been for our involvement in the in-service education of local-area K-12 personnel as they have dealt with improving educational opportunities in the face of various difficulties in their respective environments. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of the EMU faculty on issues that are before the Commission.

Thesis

The thrust of the argument I make to the Commission on behalf of the EMU College of Education faculty is this:

It would be desirable to continue the trend toward longer school days and longer school years, especially for many (if not all) of the children involved. However, we feel that the first and most important use of additional time should be to address whatever "deficits" the child/youth brings to school from the child/youth's home and/or community environment.

The role of the school needs to continue to change. The school must become more both the "broker" of a wide variety of social services to children/youth and the location for the delivery of these services. Administrators will need to become better prepared to provide leadership and facilitation in these areas.

The role of the teacher needs to continue to change. Increasingly, teachers will need to be prepared to be "front line" diagnosticians and referral agents with respect to the problems that must be remediated before children/youth are "ready to learn."

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Some Introductory Issues

A. It is difficult for those of us in the business of preparing (and providing or assisting with the in-service development of) educational personnel to know, other than in very general terms, how best to organize and deliver our programs without some greater agreement--at least for a particular geographical area--about the purpose(s) of K-12 schools.

Is the purpose of K-12 schools narrow--to impart a body of cognitive knowledge to those who can take advantage of this?

Is the purpose of K-12 schools broad--to attend to a wide range of intellectual and social needs of children and youth (and adults)?

For us, the answer is "broad."

B. Rapidly-changing social conditions in some/many/all locales have presented extraordinary challenges to K-12 schools. Children/youth often are not coming to school prepared to learn because of conditions in the environment outside of school. To what degree does the K-12 school have a responsibility for "fixing" the deficits students bring to the learning place?

As we examine the rapid demographic shifts in our population--the one out of seven children who speak a language other than English at home; the 22% who are sexually abused; the 21% who are living in poverty; and the large number of children from dysfunctional families; among those from or with other difficult situation--we can only conclude that "somebody must do something."

Eastern Michigan University is a member of The Renaissance Group, an organization of approximately 20 institutions that collectively produce a large portion of the nation's teachers and other school personnel. Just as the Holmes Group, under Dr. Lanier's leadership, has given attention to "the new American school" and "the new American teacher," the Renaissance Group is directing its attention to "the new American student"--a student vastly different from the student of the past and a student who is going to have to be served by society in ways vastly different from the past.

C. What social structure/agency(-ies) has or should have responsibility for the well-being of children/youth in areas other than traditional cognitive learning? If this social structure/agency(-ies) is dysfunctional/inadequate to the task, what responsibility, if any, does the school have?

We commend to the Commission the book *Education and the Family*, edited by Leonard Kaplan of Wayne State University--especially chapters 8-14, "Education, the Schools, and the Family." Professor Kaplan and his colleagues develop forceful arguments that, where families remain capable of supporting children, they must be brought into greater partnership with the schools. We also commend to the Commission the book *Lives on the Edge* by Valerie Polakow of the EMU College of Education faculty, especially chapters 6-9. Professor Polakow presents dramatically the "real world" of teachers and schools struggling to deal with children from single-parent homes and poverty.

We hold that, where more-or-less traditional family support structures exist, they must be brought closer to the teacher and classroom. We hold that, where adult support structures do not exist adequately in the life of a child or youth, the school must "orchestrate" community resources to compensate.

The latter point is not far from the "community school" concept, pioneered in Michigan, supported for many years by the Mott Foundation, and with which EMU has played a leadership role for a long time. We have learned from our experiences that the use of the school building during extended times of day and year for a variety of community services of benefit to all age groups is not an impossible task to organize or administer and that a greater variety of community benefit is likely to result.

Issue Summary

Changing social conditions are continuing to force new and increased responsibilities on schools. Learning can't take place effectively when children/youth are hungry, abused, without adult guidance, etc.

For schools to be effective, they are going to have to assume additional responsibilities that previously were handled by home, church, and other social institutions. However, some children/youth need little/none of such services, especially when supportive or potentially-supportive families can be brought into partnerships with schools. Other children will need a lot of such services. It will take time and other resources to provide such services. As Deborah McGriff, superintendent of the Detroit schools, said recently, "American schools have never educated low-income people."

Teachers will become, increasingly, "front-line" diagnosticians and referral agents for a wide variety of social services delivered through the school or at (or near) the school site. Teachers should not be expected to deliver such services in any appreciable way; however, there is going to have to be close linkage between teachers (and other school personnel) and other

human-service providers. A wide array of human-services providers are going to be needed in or readily available to the schools.

The point of view reflected in the previous paragraph dominates the responses to the questions given below. The questions were provided by the Commission staff.

1. What kinds of knowledge and skills are the focus of current approaches to the professional development of teachers? How much time is available, and how is the time scheduled? To what extent is there congruence between the nature of current professional development (both pre-service and in-service) and the types of knowledge and skills teachers need to improve student learning, particularly within the context of national standards and curriculum frameworks? What are the implications for the amount and kind of time needed?

A. We see the teacher of the future as not only competent in appropriate "academic" areas and in the pedagogy related to that age group or subject field, but prepared as a "front line" diagnostician and referral agent. This expanded role must be taught better to beginning teachers; at our institution we have been commended for the amount of attention given to the understanding of students who are "different" from the teacher. That is only a beginning. In-service activities toward this end are needed in greater quantities for present teachers.

Teachers need to understand and be able to work with a variety of cultural groups, to deal with a wide variety of languages other than standard English, to know about and be able to work with community agencies, to understand the workings of and how to refer to community health delivery systems, to understand the economic life of the community, to make effective home visits and to involve parents and other caregivers in schooling, and to understand and use governmental systems (e.g., criminal justice, welfare, health, drugs, safety, abuse).

B. At present, teacher diagnostic/referral time, including time spent in contacts with families, typically either (i) is at the expense of "instructional" duties during the school day or (ii) occurs outside the time when the K-12 students are present (when preparation should be occurring). Undoubtedly, too little time is available for or given to these functions at present. Teachers need time to help make these things happen. Teachers need access to and information about available community resources that can help. More community resources need to be available in many locales. Teachers need more staff help available so that both quality instruction and help for children and youth can occur.

C. Congruence between professional development and student outcomes is not as good as it should be, for such reasons as rapidly changing social conditions in many locales, lack of training on certain topics for pre- and in-service teachers, and a lack of critical issues being seen as particularly important by policy-makers. Teachers are better prepared today to work with "children of promise" than they ever have been. On the other hand, much of the lack of congruence has resulted from the fact that social conditions in many locales--the increase in the number and proportion of children "at risk" or with "special needs"--have been changing far faster than pre-service and in-service agencies have been able to deal with the circumstances.

D. Teachers need more <u>quality</u> time for planning and delivering instruction to an increasingly diverse student population, plus time for diagnostic/referral services.

E. We visualize a situation where the teacher's work day/week/year and the K-12 student's "work" day/week/year need to overlap, say 60% (a very arbitrary figure). Many K-12 students need time with other deliverers of social services--quality child care, recreation and socialization opportunities, food and nutritional services, help with language deficits, health care, self-esteem improvement, remediation and enrichment, and so on--all largely individualized to meet the particular needs of each child. Teachers need quality time (often away from students and with other adults) for both (i) preparation and professional development and (ii) diagnostic/referral responsibilities.

2. What do we know about year-round professional development opportunities for teachers? To what degree are these practices used?

A. Most information about year-round, building/district based, professional development opportunities for teachers is anecdotal--specific to a building or district. A common activity that is reported, in the educational literature or in professional conversations, is the use of time during the summer "break" for some sort of group planning for a new (to the building or district) organizational structure or instructional approach.

B. Year-round, building/district based professional development programs apparently are not used frequently around the country. Most teachers seem to be on 9-10 month contracts and, justifiably, expect to be on the payroll for professional activities.

3. Is there any evidence that year-round professional development for teachers would improve teacher and student

performance? Would these types of opportunities enhance the status of the profession? How much and what kind of time is needed?

A. In addition to district/building based professional development (of whatever quantity and quality), many teachers take college/university classes in summer, typically at their own expense and typically focused on either (a) a prospective new role (e.g., administration, counseling) or (b) expansion of knowledge and skills related to the present role. Some teachers take formal classes in order to accumulate enough credit hours to improve their position on a district's salary schedule.

B. The best evidence about improvement in teacher and student performance comes from the findings of a number of studies that have reported that teachers with advanced course work and degrees (typically obtained through combinations of night/weekend/summer study) tend to be more effective than teachers without this background. However, methodological questions remain as to whether the teachers in these studies were good to begin with, or were made better by the formal study, or some combination of both of these factors.

C. Focused year-round professional development (some of it perhaps applicable to an advanced degree, some of it not) would undoubtedly improve teacher and student performance. Focus--and individualization--seems to be of particular importance because of wide-spread dissatisfaction among teachers of "generic" professional development activities (those not seen as particularly relevant to a teacher's situation or a teacher's perceived need for improvement).

D. Undoubtedly year-round professional development would, at least indirectly, enhance the status of the profession--perhaps as much as anything by improving the collective reputation of teachers as effective helpers of children and youth.

E. A high-quality institution-based master's degree involves some 500+ clock hours in class, plus perhaps another 750+ clock hours of individual study and preparation. These clock hours often are spread across two-three calendar years, and thus amount to some 400-600 clock hours per year. These numbers may give a guide as to the quantity of time involved in a quality professional development program. At 40 hours per week, this quantity of time amounts to some 10-15 weeks. This number of weeks might be seen as approximating the current summer "break." However, undoubtedly, it would be better, based on adult learning principles, to distribute this time rather than concentrate it.

4. Do you believe the university has a unique role to play in this area?

A. Yes, the university has an essential role to play with respect to pre-service teachers in providing them with entry-level knowledge and skills such as to begin practice in any of a variety of school and community settings. Yes, the university has an important role to play with respect to in-service teachers to the extent that it is important to "back away" from everyday issues and concerns, to interact with others in different kinds of settings, to deal with broad issues, to address in depth the scholarship in the field, and the like.

B. The university may be less effective in dealing with issues faced by in-service teachers to the extent that it is important to deal with "what do I do tomorrow," how the teacher handles a very site-specific situation, and the like. In many cases, a site-based person may be of greater effectiveness.

C. Effective professional development for in-service teachers should be an appropriate mix of university-based (as in A) and building/district-based (as in B).

5. What alternatives are possible for financing professional development?

A. The current choices are not always good. In far too many instances, the education professional pays for his/her own professional development, unlike the situation in many other professions. Many school districts are able to provide some "generic" staff development opportunities and some school districts are able to provide more than this. A relatively few are able to provide financial assistance for advanced study/degrees, professional travel, and the like.

B. In at least one state (Georgia), there is an annual legislative appropriation for each school district to use for approved professional development activities for teachers.

C. Given the magnitude, there is probably no realistic way to get more financing except by (i) (preferable) appropriations of public funds (district, state, federal) and/or (ii) payment by individuals, with the incentive of "repayment" through increased salary.

6. If you were sitting on this Commission, what would be your recommendations about longer school years or days based on your understanding of what is needed for professional development of teachers and improved student learning?

A. Many K-12 students need help with their non-academic problems; otherwise, they won't be receptive learners. Many of the teaching acts, spread over short or long times and of whatever quality, will be for naught otherwise.

B. Teachers need to be a major, "front line" resource for helping K-12 students resolve/alleviate their non-academic problems through diagnosis and referral. However, teachers should not, in general, be responsible for the delivery of assistive services (e.g., health care, nutrition, substance abuse, anti-social behavior).

C. A wide variety of assistive services needs to be available to children and youth in or convenient to school buildings.

D. A first priority for an extended school day/week/year should be on providing the services to K-12 students that they need in order to be effective learners. These services will vary by locality and by child/youth.

E. A second priority should be on giving teachers at least some 1100 clock hours per year of quality instructional time with K-12 students--with the students grouped in reasonable numbers for this instruction, and with the students ready to learn.

F. Teachers need to have, as part of their work load, a few hundred clock hours per year for diagnostic/referral functions.

G. Teachers need to have, as part of their work load, opportunities to spend, say, 600-700 clock hours per year in various combinations of (i) preparation for delivering instruction and (ii) professional development. The distribution between these two categories will legitimately vary by such factors as beginning teacher/experienced teacher.

H. Teachers need professional development related to each of E, F, and G above--how best to use the quality instructional time (likely to include how to use technology most effectively in this delivery); how to function appropriately as a diagnostician/referral agent in terms of available human and other resources; and how best to organize/plan/deliver instructional services.

"The seeds of failure for many children are sown early. Tomorrow's teachers will have repsonsibility for children who will not have an easy time of it. More will be raised by single parents. More will come from families strange to the mainstream culture. More will speak languages other than English. The biggest shadow falling over tomorrow's children will be the scourge of deep poverty." (Holmes Group. *Tomorrow's Schools*, p. 29)

Tomorrow is here for many children. There is no better use of additional time for children than using it to make these persons productive, contributing members of our society. There is no better use of the time of teachers, working alongside a wide variety of other professionals, than making it possible for these children to compete on a level playing field.